

OPERATIONS COORDINATING BOARD
Washington 25, D. C.

July 20, 1956

MEMORANDUM TO THE CHAIRMEN AND MEMBERS OF WORKING GROUPS

SUBJECT: Working Group Procedures

As a result of a recent review of working group procedures by the Board Assistants and in the OCB Staff, a number of improvements in procedure have been adopted and are hereby being distributed to all chairmen and members of OCB working groups and committees. In those instances in which detailed operating procedures as set forth in Part II of the Handbook are affected the revised pages for the Handbook are attached to be inserted in place of the old pages. The gist of the changed procedures is stated below.

New Ideas Should Not Be Limited by Existing Policies

1. At the Board meeting of June 27, 1956 (Agenda Item 7b), the Board:
"Agreed that OCB Working Groups, in their consideration of programs and actions to carry out assigned NSC and other responsibilities, should not be limited to matters clearly authorized by existing policy but should consider all possible courses of action appropriate to the circumstances so that the Board may receive full benefit of working group thinking. Such working group proposals may be submitted to the Board at any time and should be plainly identified as being not clearly covered by existing policy."

The new ideas or courses of action may be submitted through the Board member, the Board Assistant, or as a working group proposal. Board consideration of progress reports and outline plans offer opportunities in this connection.

Board Views with Respect to Alternative or "Split" Proposals

2. The Board indicated at its meeting on July 11 its views with respect to receiving "divided or split papers" in Progress Reports, Outline Plans, etc. The Board Minute is as follows:

"Agreed that in too many cases honest differences of agency views have been concealed by general or compromise language and requested that the members of the OCB working groups and committees be informed of the Board's view favoring the presentation of alternative or "split" approaches or courses of action for consideration by the Board. In such cases, the alternatives should be clearly stated and the respective positions of the various agencies indicated. Agreed that the presentation of such alternatives would assist the Board in reaching agreement and in providing operating guidance."

Meetings of Working Groups

3. Informal relationships among working group members in many cases provide the best means of achieving coordination on a daily basis. The number of meetings that take place is no criterion of working group effectiveness; however, it is questionable whether OCB coordination responsibilities can be adequately fulfilled without some regularity of meetings and adequate opportunities for the exchange of information and views among the agencies represented on the working group. Chairmen and members of Working Groups are reminded that any member of the group may request that a meeting be held.

Revision of Outline Plans of Operation


4. Outline Plans will now be reviewed and revised, if necessary, by OCB working groups on the occasion of a progress report, a new National Intelligence Estimate or major changed circumstances. Outline Plans will be revised automatically to reflect revision of NSC policies. Wherever feasible, revisions in an Outline Plan will be submitted to the Board along with the Progress Report. Figures contained in Outline Plans will be considered as order of magnitude estimates. The revised form and content of the Outline Plan is illustrated by the attached sample.

Progress Reports

5. The "Detailed Developments" paper has been eliminated and provision has been made for the preparation of short coordinated background papers to facilitate the briefing of the Board members with respect to a few of the most important aspects of the report. These papers will be made available for the information of the Board through the Board Assistants, but will not be considered as parts of the report and will not be formally transmitted to the NSC. The required paragraph with respect to the status of Outline Plans has been eliminated and such information is now to be contained in the transmittal memorandum for the Board. A revised sample format is attached.

Weekly Activity Report to Replace Status Report

6. The Weekly Status Report has been changed to a Weekly Activity Report in order to emphasize the status of OCB coordinating activities, and the status of actions with respect to matters which have been or are under consideration in the Board, by the Board Assistants or working groups and committees. A sample page is attached.


Elmer B. Staats
Executive Officer

Attachments:

Draft Revised Format for Progress Reports, 7/20/56
Draft Revised Format for Outline Plans of Operations, 7/20/56
Draft Sample Format for Weekly Activity Report, 7/20/56